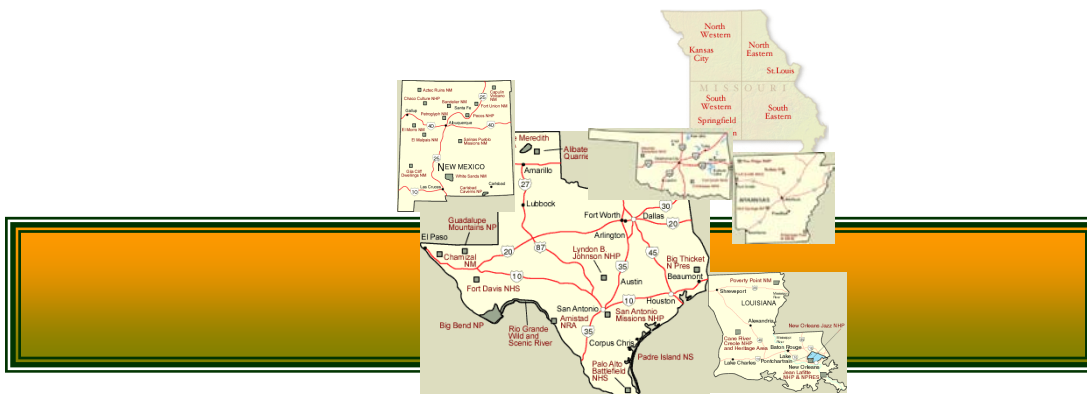


SC FIELD NOTES

South Central District

JANUARY/MARCH 2004



Serving: San Antonio, TX Carlsbad, NM Albuquerque, NM Denham Springs, LA Dallas, TX
Rolla, MO Little Rock, AR and Norman, OK

FROM THE DESK OF **EDWARD E. LOPEZ** District Manager

I would personally like to thank every individual in the South Central district, be they MSHA employee or from the industry we serve, for a much improved Safety and Health process that led to a much improved Safety and Health performance record in 2003.

I believe one common denominator embraced throughout the district was that Safety is a Value. Additionally, we have proven that 'Together, we make a positive difference in Miners' Safety and Health.' It is with pleasure I report that indeed we did make a positive difference and I tip my hat to each and every one of you.

With the beginning of each year come many opportunities for all. Each new endeavor lends opportunity to achieve excellence. Personally, I look forward with enthusiasm to these new opportunities which will include my yearly visit to each of our nine field offices, meetings with local stakeholders, and visits to a whole new list of mine properties.

I hope each of you will fulfill your dreams, meet your goals and have a Safe, Happy and Prosperous 2004.

E/.

FEATURING CARLSBAD, NEW MEXICO



The Carlsbad Field Office is supported by seven professional Safety and Health MSHA Inspectors who are highly trained to assist and provide educational mining information to promote safety practices in the mining industry. Mr. James Thomas, Supervisor of Carlsbad Field Office, together with his crew, are ready to answer questions, train and improve safety measures. Carlsbad staff to R: Mr. Randy Hanes, Mr. Roberto Garcia, Mr. Crockett, and Mr. Joe Nicolas. Unavailable at time of photo: Mr. Laurance Hanes, Mr. Henry Tytor, and Mr. Kirk Stephen. Photo taken by Mr. James Thomas.



SPECIAL GUEST

In the San Antonio Field Office

L to R: Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, Supv., Mr. Larry Parks, Comp. Specialist, Ms. Keiko Brown, Comp. Specialist, Mr. Dave Lauriski, Asst. Sec. of Labor, Mr. Edward Lopez, DM, and Mr. Frank Johnson, V.P. of Hallett Materials.

On December 10th, Keiko Brown, Larry Parks, Kevin Busby and Ralph Rodriguez from the San Antonio Field office attended the Sentinels of Safety Banquet in New Caney, TX. Special guests were Dave Lauriski and Eddie Lopez. The banquet was sponsored by the New Caney Chamber of Commerce. There were 89 people in attendance.

The banquet was a huge success.

Mr. Lauriski presented the Sentinels of Safety trophy to Mr. Frank Johnson, V.P. Hallett Materials, the company had worked 90,595 injury free hours. Other guests were Mrs. Rasmussen and Jeff Rasmussen owners of the company, who flew in from Iowa to attend the banquet.



MISSISSIPPI POTASH MPI WEST WINNERS OF THE 2002 SENTINIAL OF SAFETY AWARD

Submitted by Mr. James Thomas
Carlsbad Field Office Supervisor

CONGRATULATIONS



TOP:

MPI West
2002
Sentinels of
Safety cake

CENTER:

Lynn Irish &
Cathy Goad
cake cutters
for the
celebration.

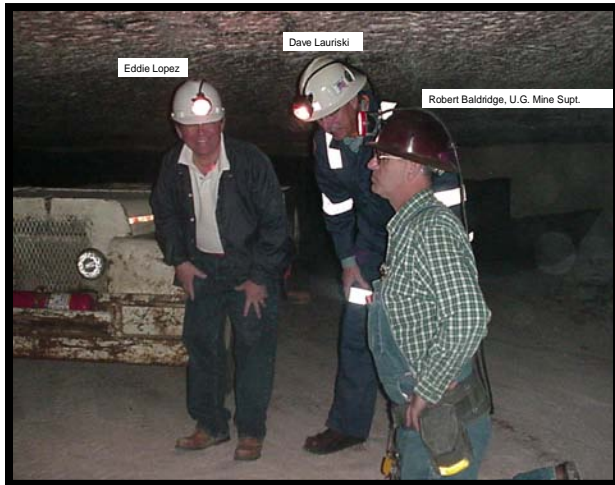


BOTTOM:

Mr. Dave
Lauriski (In
blue shirt)
and Mr.
Edward
Lopez (white
polo shirt)
speak with
some of the
miners.

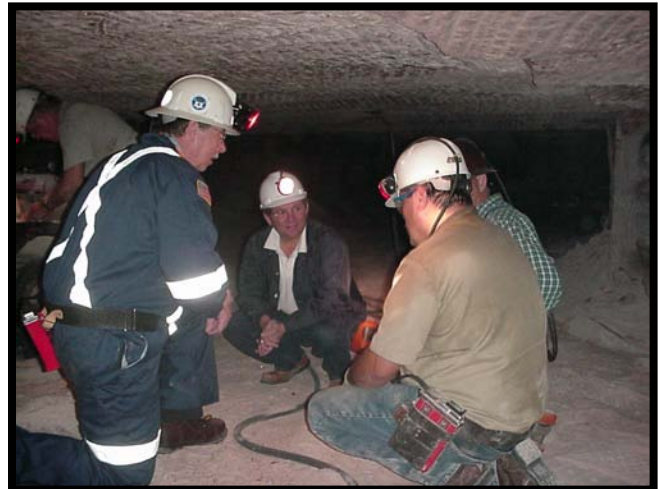
The Assistant Secretary, Mr. Dave Lauriski and SC District Manager, Mr. Edward Lopez, arrived in Carlsbad, New Mexico on December 03, 2003, to attend the Sentinels of Safety Winner, Mississippi Potash, Inc., West Mine cook-out that was held at the mine property on December 04, 2003.





Mr. Lauriski and Mr. Lopez were escorted on an underground tour of the West Mine on Thursday morning, December 04, 2003, and then attended the cook-out.

Mr. Lauriski and Mr. Lopez spoke to 140 miners and Mr. Lauriski passed out certificates to each one of them during the celebration.



After the celebration Mr. Lauriski and Mr. Lopez visited the WIPP site and went on an underground and surface tour. It was most impressive.

On Friday morning, December 05, Mr. Lauriski and Mr. Lopez visited the Carlsbad Field Office, met and conversed with all of the inspectors.



TOP L:

Mr. Edward Lopez, Mr. Dave Lauriski, and Robert Baldridge, U.G. Mine Supt.

TOP R:

Mr. Dave Lauriski, Mr. Edward Lopez, and Mr. Randy Martinez.

CENTER STANDING:

Mr. Randy Foote, VP of Operations and Mr. Dave Lauriski.

BOTTOM:

Mr. Dave Lauriski and Mr. James Thomas, Supervisor of Carlsbad Field Office.



Sentinels of Safety celebration held at the Doe Run Company, Sweet Water Mine in Bunker, Missouri on October 15, 2003



An impressive collection of Sentinels of Safety trophies earned by Doe Run Company over the years are displayed. Standing by the Sentinels of Safety Banner is Jeffrey Zelms, Vice Chairman, President & CEO of Doe Run Resources Corp. and Robert M. Friend, Administrator, MNM.



Mr. Robert M. Friend, Administrator, Mine Safety and Health Administration, MNM.



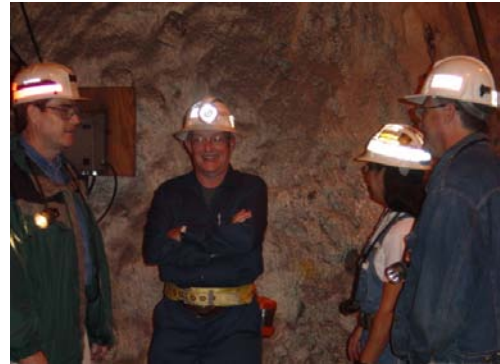
Mr. Jeffrey L. Zelms, Vice Chairman, President and CEO of Doe Run Resource Corporation.



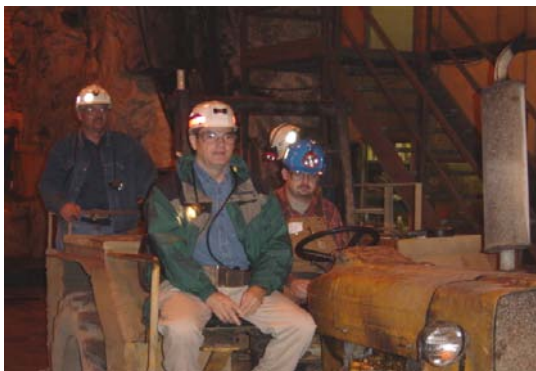
Mr. Jack Gerard, President & CEO, National Mining Association.



Left to Right; Robert M. Friend engaged in many discussions with miners while touring the Sweetwater mine such as this one with Denis Murphy, Safety/Environmental Manager, Jenny McBurnett, Underground Storekeeper and Robert Seelke, MSHA Field Office Supervisor in Rolla, MO.



Doe Run representatives Charlie Jones, Don Jenkins, Clay Harper and Betty Pogue being congratulated by Jack Gerard, National Mining Association President & CEO and Robert M. Friend, Administrator, MNM.



Left to Right; Robert Seelke, MSHA Field Office Supervisor in Rolla, MO , Robert M. Friend, Administrator MNM and Randy Henning, Mine Supt. For Doe Run Sweetwater Mine prepare to embark on a tour of the underground mine.

ST. BARBARA DAY

CELEBRATION AT THE AVERY ISLAND MINE

Submitted by
Joseph Olivier, EFS and George Olivier, Compliance Specialist
Denham Springs Field Office



For many years the Avery Island Mine has been celebrating St. Barbara Day. The ceremonies normally begin at 2:00pm and end at 4:00pm. The mine is shut down during this two hour period so that all can attend the blessing. Local dignitaries, retirees, MSHA, company officials from their head quarters, and local news media are invited to attend this celebration. During the ceremony, the company highlighted some of their achievements and goals in reference to the safety of the miners. Currently, they are celebrating 850,000 man hours without a lost time accident. The short term goal is to reach one million man hours and the long term goal is to reach three million man hours. Two ministers from different denominations took part in the blessing of the miners. Food and beverage were served following the ceremonies.



On the right, MSHA Compliance Specialist, Mr. George Olivier.



In the middle, Union President. Mr. Floyd Richard.

The History of St. Barbara

The setting of the legend of St. Barbara is the Roman Empire around the year 300 AD. Barbara lived during the decline of this great empire. She lived in a time when people worshiped Roman gods like Mars, Jupiter, and Venus, and when being a Christian was extremely dangerous. Barbara was a kind, extremely beautiful young girl. She was well educated in mathematics, physics, chemistry, as well as philosophy. When she was sixteen she had already studied the Christian scripts. The combination of her beauty and intellect attracted many young bachelors to her lessons on Christianity, which she conducted at her father's home.

Disturbed by all this, but afraid of losing his daughter's love, her father figured out an ingenious, but costly solution to the problem. He built Barbara a private tower in his backyard, which had only one door so he could keep an eye on who was coming.

As Magistrate of a portion of the Roman Empire, he was required by Rome to make several inspection trips each year. It was during one of these trips that things got out of hand and Barbara had all of the statues of the Roman gods thrown out of the tower. She also had contractors install a third window. This was to demonstrate her belief in the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and lastly she had herself baptized.

Upon his return, Barbara's father became enraged, drew his sword and ran toward his daughter. Barbara ran away and hid from her father. A local shepherd, however, for the reward of a few silver coins revealed her hiding place to her father. Barbara's father brought her back home and locked her in the tower. In an effort to break her

will, he kept her in solitary confinement. However, Barbara's devoted prayers were answered and a lightning bolt struck the tower, splitting it in two, allowing Barbara to escape again.

On Barbara's second escape, she was taken in by a group of miners, who hid her in a nearby mine. Her presence enlightened the miserable working conditions underground and Barbara was so pleased with her new friends and shelter, she felt she could stay there forever. However, one day she left the mine to take a walk on the surface and was spotted by her father's soldiers and recaptured.



Employees gather for the blessing of the mine.

Deciding not to bring her back to his home, her father instead took her to the courthouse, where she was interrogated and tortured on a bed of broken glass, salt and vinegar, all day. Heavily wounded she was then thrown into a dark dungeon. In the dark of night Christ appeared to her and the next morning, on December 4th, in the year 306, Barbara had not only received comfort but her wounds had healed completely.

On the second day of interrogations, astonished at her miraculous recovery

and unable to break her faith, the judge sentenced her to death by beheading. However, due to a Roman Empire directive, which did not allow anyone to believe in Christianity from being made a Martyr, the judge quietly banned Barbara to an isolated area. This sentence enraged Barbara's father, who took out his own sword and decapitated his outlawed daughter. While blood was still dripping from his sword, lightning struck and reduced him to a pile of ashes.



Open ceremony conducted by Mr. Lonnie Badeaux, Safety Coordinator.



The Deacon prepares to bless the miners.



Blessing of the Miners

The legendary life and death of Barbara made such an impression on the people of that area, that it became one of the earliest Christian communities. From this town in Turkey, the Barbara devotion spread throughout the entire Christian world. Today, almost 1,700 years later, all miners throughout the world still get together on December 4th to pay tribute to Barbara. Because of the help and shelter that miners gave her, Barbara considered them her only true friends.



The bell was sounded for every miner that lost his life at this mine.

On December 4, 2003, the mine's 105 anniversary, everyone gathered to pay tribute to St. Barbara.



Blessing of the Miners



Media Attention

**AN INTERVIEW
WITH
MARY OROZCO
District Secretary**

Submitted by Bruce Palmer

The first person to greet callers or visitors in the South Central District Office would most likely be the District Secretary. It is a position of extreme importance because it is directly connected to the District Manager. It takes a committed, reliable, and organized person to professionally manage the daily operations of the district front office.



Q: There are some who say you're an institution in MSHA – at least, in South Central District.

MARY: You mean an "icon"?
(laughs)

Q: Something like that. How long have you been with the agency?

MARY: May of 1989. I started working for the Federal Government with EEOC, here in Dallas, then went to HHS, where I worked for 6 years. When I came here, I just carried all my little things right down the hall!

Q: Why did you decide to come to work for MSHA?

MARY: It was a promotion.

Q: What are some of your personal goals?

MARY: My goals are very simple. Just to enjoy my grandchildren, my children, my husband, and spend time with my siblings and my father. In terms of career goals, I'm happy right where I am.

Q: You mean, in the hub of District activity?

MARY: Yes!

Q: Can you tell us of some of your activities outside MSHA?

MARY: Before I got sick, I did a lot of volunteer work at the Veterans Administration Medical Center here in Dallas. After that I started coaching soccer. I did that for 13 years. I served on the Youth Board. I've done work at the Battered Women's Shelter. And, of course, the Church – that's a must! I have 4 grandchildren – 2 boys, 2 girls: Dylan, 9, Eliani, 9, Dallas (that's right!), 8, and Savannah, 3. What am I doing right now? I'm just enjoying doing nothing or anything! When I'm eligible to retire, I plan to spend half of the time in Dallas, and half in St. Louis.

Q: When do you plan to retire?

MARY: Oh, somewhere in the next 5 to 10 years!

Q: Is there any particular experience you've had with MSHA that has said to you, "I'm really glad I'm here" – "I'm glad I'm part of MSHA"?

MARY: I get that feeling every day. Every day there's someone I'm glad I was here for.

Q: Have you ever had a “near miss” or any kind of accident experience you’d like to share – that might help someone else avoid an accident in the future?

MARY: I’ve had two serious car accidents, one in Germany and one in Washington, DC – both with total rollovers. The first one, in Germany, was when my son was 6 weeks old, and he was in the car. There were also three ladies in my car, one pregnant and due any day. Another vehicle ran a stop sign, heading downhill when he hit us broadside. That’s why our vehicle rolled over. We all survived with just minor scratches, even the baby. One of the women had cradled him as we were struck and pinned him between herself and dash. All of us adults were wearing seatbelts. The second accident was when another driver ran a red light, and was heading downhill and hit us broadside, much like the first accident. And, of course, there has been my battle with cancer. Two more years and I’ll be considered in “total remission.”

Q: Do you have any last words for our readers?

MARY: The only thing I can say is: Like what you’re doing. If you struggle every morning getting up, then you need to refocus on your life’s goals. If you’re unhappy, you’re in the wrong line of work. We’re all blessed to have a job. We’re blessed to work for the government, to serve the public – because the public is our friend and neighbor.



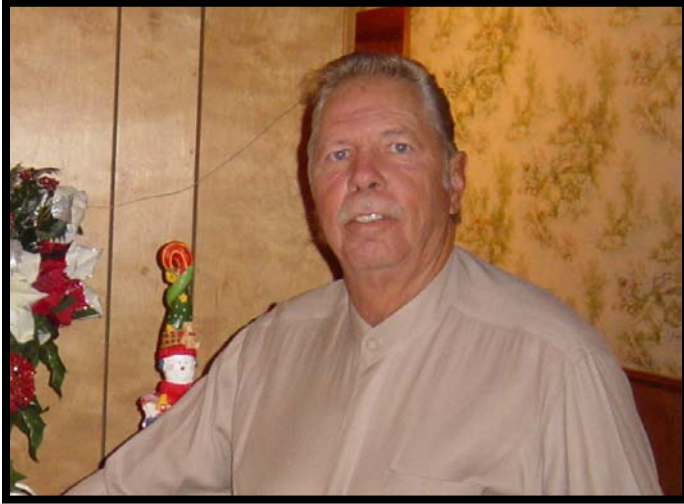
HERO AT LARGE

Mr. Ronnie Crockett, Compliance Specialist in Carlsbad, NM, gave nine coats to freezing miners in El Paso, Texas. The temperature was too much to handle for the nine miners. Mr. Robert Garcia, Compliance Specialist, also from the Carlsbad Field Office, was at the scene and was able to translate to the nine miners who spoke no English.

Not only are MSHA Compliance Specialists professional and highly skilled, but also compassionate.

AN INTERVIEW WITH
OREN DECUIR

Compliance Specialist
Denham Springs Field Office



Q: Oren, there are some people who see you as something of an institution in this agency. How long have you been with MSHA?

OREN: Since 1978.

Q: Why did you decide to come to work for MSHA?

OREN: I had worked at the Belle Isle salt mine here in Louisiana for 15 years. I lost my brother-in-law in the Belle Isle disaster when 21 miners were killed. All the time I was working there I always had a belief in the importance of saving lives. At that time, we didn't have the safety training we have today, but I did have some training, and I decided to leave working at the mine in order to save lives. I felt MSHA would be an organization that would help me do that.

Q: What are some of your personal goals?

OREN: When I retire, which will be December 31st, I intend to do consulting work on a part-time basis, and spend more time with my family, including my father, who is 89 years old. And to help people who need help – to save lives, just as I've been

able to do with MSHA. And I'll do some hunting and fishing, when I feel like it. I want to emphasize that! I'll do what I want to do WHEN I FEEL LIKE DOING IT. That's part of what retirement is, isn't it?

Why am I retiring? I love my job, but I'm 62 years old and I'm at a point where I need to leave the road for awhile. I'll spend as much time with my family as possible. If I get bored, I'm going back to school. I'm a Viet Nam vet, and have never used the GI Bill. I also plan on joining the American Legion and getting involved in veterans affairs.

Q: Can you tell us of some of your activities outside MSHA?

OREN: I love fishing. I love hunting. I love swimming. I love walking -- I do it every day. Even when I'm at a hotel after working, I'll walk in the evening. I have a dog, too -- a little Chihuahua that I call "Tamale." He's not actually my dog. He's my daughter's dog, but I love him.

Q: Is there any particular experience you've had with MSHA that has said to you, "I'm really glad I'm here" – "I'm glad I'm part of MSHA"?

OREN: Oh, yes. It was at the Jefferson Island mine [an underground salt mine which extends under the Gulf of Mexico]. When Texaco accidentally drilled into the salt dome, it let fresh water in and they lost 7 barges and a tugboat that were sucked into the whirlpool and down into the salt dome. This type disaster had never happened before, and we had geologists and mine engineers from all over the world come there. I was one of the first inspectors to arrive on the property.

There was one humorous thing that happened while I was there. After this all came about, MSHA installed two portable trailers on the island with sensors surrounding the mine. We stayed probably 3 to 4 months, and all we did was monitor this computer system. We had nine sensors placed around the island. The purpose was to determine if the salt dome would shift in any way. I was working the graveyard shift, when the instrument started to go haywire. I called my supervisor, and I told him we had a problem. So he came over, and then he and I decided to walk over to the sensor that was going haywire. When we got there, we found the source of the problem: a Louisiana pelican was walking on top of the sensor!

There was another incident at the same mine – it was June 25, 1979 – and I wrote the first 103(k) order for withdrawal of the miners. At the time we were trying to determine how much methane gas was in the mine. Every time there was a blast, we would go into the faces to check the methane. I took my readings 12 inches from the face, and determined it was a gassy mine, and that was what led to the gassy mine standards that we have today.

In 1985 I wrote my first citation for lack of fall protection, on three miners working on a roof who were not tied off. I've written dozens of such citations since, which undoubtedly has saved dozens of lives.

Q: Have you ever had a “near miss” or any kind of accident experience

you'd like to share – that might help someone else avoid an accident in the future?

OREN: I wouldn't call it a near miss. But I had something happen just three months ago. I'm in a social club, called Club Matinee. The men go out on a weekend to a ballgame or whatever. We went to Biloxi, MS to a casino in a 15-passenger van. On the way back we were at a red light, when a young man who had been drinking struck the van in the rear with his vehicle at approximately 45 miles an hour. Two of us were immediately evacuated to the hospital, and some of the injuries were serious. Everybody in the van was wearing a seatbelt, and I'm sure if we had not, the injuries would have been much more serious. The young man was not wearing his seatbelt, and was very seriously injured. He was thrown out of his car.

Q: Do you have any last words for our readers?

OREN: Last year at the Joint Mine Conference in Oklahoma, I received a plaque from Eddie Lopez, our District Manager. It says — “Certificate of Achievement [for] your positive impact on the mining community by enhancing the professional image of the Mine Safety and Health Administration.” I'll remember this for the rest of my life.

I would like to say to all of my friends that after I retire I WILL stay in touch with them...WHEN I FEEL LIKE IT!

THE CLR CORNER

The Conference Litigation office was a busy spot during 2003. The CLR office conducted 232 conferences with a total of 836 Citation/Orders. Of the 836 Citation/Orders, only 36 were vacated in the District. This is only 4.3 % of the



total Citation/Orders that were issued. **This was a good indicator that Specialists in the District are issuing good solid Citations and Orders.** We do not at this time have a tracking system to show us how many of the Citations/Orders which were conferenced have been contested, but I have been promised a system will be up and running this coming year. Keep up

the good work and if we are going err let's do it on the side of the safety and health of the miner.

Mr. Mesa is shown seated in his office located in the downtown area of Dallas. Photo was taken by Ms. Charlene Homuth, MIS Clerk of SCD.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

From the Employees of the South Central District to all miners throughout the mining industry as well as all employees of the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

We wish you a safe, productive and happy new year!

